

1 Mark L. Javitch (CA SBN 323729)
2 Javitch Law Office
3 480 S. Ellsworth Ave
4 San Mateo, CA 94401
5 Telephone: (650) 781-8000
6 Facsimile: (650) 648-0705
7 mark@javitchlawoffice.com
8 *Attorney for Plaintiff*
9 and the Putative Class
10

11 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
12 CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
13

14 THANE CHARMAN, individually and on
15 behalf of all others similarly situated

16 Plaintiff,

17 v.

18 BIOGNOMICS LAB, LLC, a California
19 Limited Liability Company, JON
20 PHILLIP LICATA, an individual, DAVID
21 LEE OTTESTAD, an individual, and
22 JOHN DOE, an unknown business entity,

23 Defendants.
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Case No.: _____

CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

25 **CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT**

26 1. Plaintiff THANE CHARMAN (“Plaintiff”) brings this Class Action
27 Complaint and Demand for Jury Trial against Defendant BIOGNOMICS LAB, LLC,
28 (“BLL”) Defendant JON PHILLIP LICATA (“Licata”), Defendant DAVID LEE
OTTESTAD, (“Ottestad”) and Defendant JOHN DOE (“John Doe” or together,
“Defendants”) to stop their illegal practice of making unauthorized calls that play

1 prerecorded voice messages to the cellular telephones of consumers nationwide, and to
2 obtain redress for all persons injured by their conduct. Plaintiff alleges as follows upon
3 personal knowledge as to itself and its own acts and experiences, and, as to all other
4 matters, upon information and belief, including investigation conducted by its attorney.
5

6 **NATURE OF THE ACTION**

7 2. Defendant BLL sells COVID-19 testing kits. Defendants LICATA and
8 OTTESTAD work in cooperation with and for BLL to plan and carry out BLL's
9 marketing. As a part of their sales efforts, Defendants and their agent John Doe placed
10 thousands of calls employing an artificial or prerecorded voice message to cell phones and
11 residential phones nationwide.
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13 3. In 2013, the FCC required prior express written consent for all prerecorded
14 voice calls ("robocalls") to wireless numbers. Specifically, it ordered that:
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16 [A] consumer's written consent to receive telemarketing robocalls must be
17 signed and be sufficient to show that the consumer: (1) received "clear and
18 conspicuous disclosure" of the consequences of providing the requested
19 consent, i.e., that the consumer will receive future calls that deliver
20 prerecorded messages by or on behalf of a specific seller; and (2) having
21 received this information, agrees unambiguously to receive such calls at a
22 telephone number the consumer designates.[] In addition, the written
23 agreement must be obtained "without requiring, directly or indirectly, that the
24 agreement be executed as a condition of purchasing any good or service.[]"

25 *In the Matter of Rules & Regulations Implementing the Tel. Consumer Prot. Act of 1991*,
26 27 F.C.C. Rcd. 1830, 1844 (2012) (footnotes omitted) ("the FCC Letter").
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1 4. Defendants had not received consent prior to placing these calls and,
2 therefore, are in violation of the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (“TCPA”), 47 U.S.C.
3 § 227.
4

5 5. Congress enacted the TCPA in 1991 to restrict the use of sophisticated
6 telemarketing equipment that could target millions of consumers *en masse*. Congress
7 found that these calls were not only a nuisance and an invasion of privacy to consumers
8 specifically but were also a threat to interstate commerce generally. *See* S. Rep. No. 102-
9 178, at 2-3 (1991), as reprinted in 1991 U.S.C.C.A.N. 1968, 1969-71.
10

11 6. Despite such strong legislation passed almost 30 years ago, the same problem
12 persists.
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14 7. To illustrate the scale of the problem facing America, it is estimated that there
15 were over 47 billion robocalls placed in 2018, and 29 billion placed in just the first half of
16 2019.
17

18 8. Robocallers repeatedly and blatantly violate federal law with impunity
19 because their calls are made anonymously. They are so hard to track down that they are
20 rarely caught, so robocall volumes have continued to rise.
21

22 9. Most of the perpetrators are never identified because companies structure their
23 business to keep their robocalling outsourced to third parties who offer a shield from
24 scrutiny.
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JURISDICTION AND VENUE

19. This Court has federal subject matter jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1331, as the action arises under the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, 47 U.S.C. § 227, which is a federal statute.

20. This Court has general jurisdiction over Defendants because they reside in this district.

21. Venue is proper in this District pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(1) because Defendants reside in this district.

COMMON FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

22. Defendant BLL sells its COVID 19 testing kits.

23. Defendant LICATA and OTTESTAD are employed at BLL.

24. Defendant John Doe is an unknown business entities.

25. To increase their sales and avoid paying for legitimate forms of advertising, BLL, LICATA, OTTESTAD, hired John Doe to market their company and produce inbound calls.

26. John Doe amassed a list of thousands of phone numbers from unknown sources that were believed to belong to business phone numbers, but Defendants did not actually segregate out cellular and residential phones as would have been required for the calls to be (potentially) legal.

1 27. BLL, LICATA, and OTTESTAD failed to ensure that John Doe was not also
2 calling residential and cellular phones as prohibited by 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(1)(A)(iii) and
3 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(1)(B).

5 28. When Plaintiff and the class answered the calls, they heard a prerecorded
6 voice message.

7 29. When Plaintiff and the Class members listened to their messages expecting to
8 hear from a real person, they instead heard a prerecorded voice message.

10 30. Defendants hoped that if enough people purchased their product as a result of
11 the robocalls, it would justify the annoyance experienced by the recipients of the calls as
12 the “cost of doing business.”

14 31. Defendants did not possess consent from Plaintiff and the Class as required
15 prior to deploying these prohibited messages.

17 **FACTS SPECIFIC TO PLAINTIFF THANE CHARMAN**

18 32. On or around January 22, 2022 at 9:40 a.m., Plaintiff received a call from
19 Defendant and/or its agent John Doe on Plaintiff’s cell phone ending in 1119.

21 33. The caller ID displayed as (310) 295-1182.

22 34. Plaintiff answered and he heard a prerecorded voice.

23 35. The voice informed Plaintiff that a COVID 19 testing kit was available by
24 going to the website boomerangkit.com and selecting free registration.
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1 36. Plaintiff visited the website boomerangkit.com and read the terms and
2 conditions which indicate it is operated by BLL.

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4 37. Plaintiff also called BLL and spoke to Defendant OTTESTAD, who then sent
5 Plaintiff a solicitation email from the boomerangkit.com email domain.

6 38. Plaintiff never consented to receive calls from Defendants. Plaintiff had no
7 relationship with Defendants and had never requested that Defendants contact Plaintiff in
8 any manner, let alone by robocall.
9

10 **THEORIES OF LIABILITY AGAINST DEFENDANTS**

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12 39. Even if BLL, LICATA, or OTTESTAD did not personally initiate the TCPA-
13 violating calls, BLL, LICATA, and OTTESTAD are liable if they took steps to cause the
14 calls to be made, or if the calls were made pursuant to its actual or apparent authority, or
15 ratification. Further, BLL, LICATA, and OTTESTAD are liable for participating in a joint
16 enterprise or acting in concert with John Doe.
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18 **DIRECT LIABILITY UNDER THE TCPA**

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20 47. Defendants' scheme involves the use of illegal robocalling to promote their
21 services.

22 48. John Doe has direct liability under the TCPA for calling Plaintiff's phone
23 using an artificial or prerecorded voice.
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25 49. BLL, LICATA, and OTTESTAD are also directly liable under the TCPA for
26 outsourcing their telemarketing to John Doe.
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1 50. On May 9, 2013, the FCC confirmed this principle in a Declaratory Ruling
2 holding that sellers may not avoid liability by outsourcing telemarketing:
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4 [A]llowing the seller to avoid potential liability by outsourcing its
5 telemarketing activities to unsupervised third parties would leave consumers
6 in many cases without an effective remedy for telemarketing intrusions. This
7 would particularly be so if the telemarketers were judgment proof,
8 unidentifiable, or located outside the United States, as is often the case. Even
9 where third-party telemarketers are identifiable, solvent, and amenable to
10 judgment limiting liability to the telemarketer that physically places the call
11 would make enforcement in many cases substantially more expensive and less
12 efficient, since consumers (or law enforcement agencies) would be required
to sue each marketer separately in order to obtain effective relief. As the FTC
noted, because “[s]ellers may have thousands of ‘independent’ marketers,
suing one or a few of them is unlikely to make a substantive difference for
consumer privacy.

13 *May 2013 FCC Ruling*, 28 FCC Rcd at 6588 (¶ 37) (internal citations omitted).

14 **VICARIOUS / AGENCY LIABILITY**

15 51. The May 2013 FCC Ruling rejected a narrow view of TCPA liability,
16 including the assertion that a seller’s liability requires a finding of formal agency and
17 immediate direction and control over the third-party who placed the telemarketing call.
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19 *Id.* at 6587 n. 107.

20 52. Prior to conducting discovery in this litigation, due to the anonymous nature
21 of robocalling, Plaintiff has no way to identify the exact parties who called its phone. It
22 could have been BLL, LICATA, OTTESTAD. or some other unknown company, John
23 Doe.
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1 53. However, for the purposes of TCPA liability, Plaintiff is not expected to know
2 this information at the pleading stage.

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4 54. The May 2013 FCC Ruling states that called parties may obtain “evidence of
5 these kinds of relationships . . . through discovery, if they are not independently privy to
6 such information.” *Id.* at 6592-593 (¶ 46). Moreover, evidence of circumstances pointing
7 to apparent authority on behalf of the telemarketer “should be sufficient to place upon the
8 seller the burden of demonstrating that a reasonable consumer would not sensibly assume
9 that the telemarketer was acting as the seller’s authorized agent.” *Id.* at 6593 (¶ 46).

12 **ACTUAL AUTHORITY**

13 55. Defendants BLL, LICATA, and OTTESTAD gave actual authority to John
14 Doe to generate prospective customers.

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16 56. BLL, LICATA, and OTTESTAD’s integration of robocalling into their sales
17 process was so seamless that it appeared to outside parties like Plaintiff that John Doe was
18 the telemarketing department of BLL.

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20 57. BLL, LICATA, and OTTESTAD acted in concert with John Doe and has been
21 able to enjoy the benefits of mass robocalling while moving the illegal activity “outside
22 their purview.”

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24 58. John Doe had actual authority to make robocalls to Plaintiff on behalf of
25 Defendants BLL, LICATA, and OTTESTAD

1 reviewed the outside entity's telemarketing scripts. Finally, a seller would be
2 responsible under the TCPA for the unauthorized conduct of a third-party
3 telemarketer that is otherwise authorized to market on the seller's behalf if the
4 seller knew (or reasonably should have known) that the telemarketer was
5 violating the TCPA on the seller's behalf and the seller failed to take effective
6 steps within its power to force the telemarketer to cease that conduct.

28 FCC Rcd at 6592 (¶ 46).

7 63. BLL, LICATA, and OTTESTAD authorized John Doe to generate
8 prospective customers for them.

9 64. The integration of BLL's sales efforts with robocalling by John Doe was so
10 seamless that it appeared to Plaintiff that John Doe was one and the same company with
11 BLL.
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13 65. Plaintiff reasonably believed and relied on the fact that John Doe had received
14 permission and instructions from BLL, LICATA, and OTTESTAD to advertise BLL's
15 COVID-19 tests.
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17 **RATIFICATION**

18 66. Defendants BLL, LICATA, and OTTESTAD actively accepted business that
19 originated through the illegal robocalls placed by John Doe.
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21 67. By accepting a contract written with Plaintiff pursuant to a robocall, BLL,
22 LICATA, and OTTESTAD "manifest[ed] assent or otherwise consent[ed] . . . to act" on
23 behalf of Defendant John Doe, as described in the Restatement (Third) of Agency.
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1 prerecorded voice; (5) for the purpose of selling BLL's services; (6)
2 where Defendants did not have prior express written consent to
3 place such call at the time it was made.

4 90. The following people are excluded from the Class: (1) any Judge or Magistrate
5 presiding over this action and members of their families; (2) Defendants, Defendants'
6 subsidiaries, parents, successors, predecessors, and any entity in which the Defendants or
7 their parents have a controlling interest and its current or former employees, officers and
8 directors; (3) persons who properly execute and file a timely request for exclusion from
9 the Class; (4) persons whose claims in this matter have been finally adjudicated on the
10 merits or otherwise released; (5) Plaintiff's counsel and Defendants' counsel; and (6) the
11 legal representatives, successors, and assigns of any such excluded persons.
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14 91. **Numerosity:** The exact number of the Class members is unknown and not
15 available to Plaintiff, but it is clear that individual joinder is impracticable. On information
16 and belief, Defendants placed telephone calls to thousands of consumers who fall into the
17 definition of the Class. Members of the Class can be identified through Defendants'
18 records.
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21 92. **Typicality:** Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of other members of
22 the Class, in that Plaintiff and the Class members sustained damages arising out of
23 Defendants' uniform wrongful conduct and unsolicited telephone calls.
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25 93. **Adequate Representation:** Plaintiff will fairly and adequately represent and
26 protect the interests of the other members of the Class. Plaintiff's claims are made in a
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1 representative capacity on behalf of the other members of the Class. Plaintiff has no
2 interests antagonistic to the interests of the other members of the proposed Class and is
3 subject to no unique defenses. Plaintiff has retained competent counsel to prosecute the
4 case on behalf of Plaintiff and the proposed Class. Plaintiff and Plaintiff's counsel are
5 committed to vigorously prosecuting this action on behalf of the members of the Class and
6 have the financial resources to do so.
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9 **94. Policies Generally Applicable to the Class:** This class action is appropriate
10 for certification because Defendants have acted or refused to act on grounds generally
11 applicable to the Class as a whole, thereby requiring the Court's imposition of uniform
12 relief to ensure compatible standards of conduct toward the Class members and making
13 final injunctive relief appropriate with respect to the Class as a whole. Defendants'
14 practices challenged herein apply to and affect the Class members uniformly, and
15 Plaintiff's challenge of those practices hinge on Defendants' conduct with respect to the
16 Class as a whole, not on facts or law applicable only to Plaintiff.
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19 **95. Commonality and Predominance:** There are many questions of law and fact
20 common to the claims of Plaintiff and the Class, and those questions predominate over
21 any questions that may affect individual members of the Class. Common questions for the
22 Class include, but are not necessarily limited to the following:
23

- 24 i. Whether Defendants placed phone calls to Plaintiff and the putative
25 class
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- ii. Whether the phone calls played an artificial or prerecorded voice.
- iii. Whether Defendants possessed express written consent prior to calling Plaintiff and the members of the Class;
- iv. Whether Defendants' conduct was *willing* or *knowing* under the TCPA;
- v. Whether members of the Class are entitled to treble damages based on the knowingness or willfulness of Defendants' conduct.

96. **Superiority:** This case is also appropriate for class certification because class proceedings are superior to all other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of this controversy as joinder of all parties is impracticable. The damages suffered by the individual members of the Class will likely be relatively small, especially given the burden and expense of individual prosecution of the complex litigation necessitated by Defendants' actions. Thus, it would be virtually impossible for the individual members of the Class to obtain effective relief from Defendants' misconduct. Even if members of the Class could sustain such individual litigation, it would still not be preferable to a class action, because individual litigation would increase the delay and expense to all parties due to the complex legal and factual controversies presented in this Complaint. By contrast, a class action presents far fewer management difficulties and provides the benefits of single adjudication, economy of scale, and comprehensive supervision by a single Court. Economies of time, effort and expense will be fostered, and uniformity of decisions ensured.

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

Telephone Consumer Protection Act
Violation of 47 U.S.C. § 227
(On behalf of Plaintiff and the TCPA Class)

97. Plaintiff incorporates the foregoing allegations as if fully set forth herein.

98. John Doe placed telephone calls to Plaintiff's and the Class members' cellular and/or residential telephones without having their prior express written consent to do so.

99. The calls were made for the express purpose of soliciting customers for BLL's COVID-19 tests.

100. When Plaintiff and the Class answered, the calls played an artificial or prerecorded voice message to their cellular and/or residential phones as proscribed by 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(1)(A)(iii) and 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(1)(B).

101. As a result of its unlawful conduct, Defendants repeatedly invaded Plaintiff's and the Class's personal privacy, causing them to suffer damages and, under 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(3)(B), entitling them to recover \$500 in civil fines for each violation and an injunction requiring Defendants to stop their illegal calling campaign.

102. Defendants and/or its agent made the violating calls "*willfully*" and/or "*knowingly*" under 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(3)(C).

103. If the court finds that Defendants *willfully* and/or *knowingly* violated this subsection, the court may increase the civil fine from \$500 to \$1500 per violation under 47 U.S.C. § 227(b)(3)(C).

SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION

Violation of Cal. Civ. Code §1770(a)(22)(A)

California Consumer Legal Remedies Act

Injunctive Relief

(on behalf of Plaintiff and the California Class)

104. Plaintiff incorporates the foregoing allegations as if fully set forth herein.

105. BLL, LICATA, OTTESTAD and John Doe placed telephone calls to Plaintiff's and the Class members' telephones.

106. Defendants did not have consent to place such calls.

107. Defendants' calls were made for a commercial purpose.

108. When Plaintiff and the Subclass answered their phones, they heard an artificial or prerecorded voice message.

109. The calls did not first begin by introducing the organization calling and asking permission from a natural voice, as required by Cal. Civ. Code §1770(a)(22)(A).

110. On April 12, 2022, Plaintiff sent a notice of CLRA violation to Defendants via certified mail pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1782(a)(1).

111. As a result of its unlawful conduct, Defendants repeatedly invaded Plaintiff's and the Class's personal privacy.

112. Plaintiff has incurred actual damages in the form of annoyance, wasted time, wasted cell phone battery, and for the cost of postage to mail Defendants a complaint letter.

113. Plaintiff and the class seek injunctive relief.

THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION

Unlawful Prong of California Unfair Competition Law

Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code §17200

(on behalf of Plaintiff and the California Class)

114. Plaintiff incorporates the foregoing allegations as if fully set forth herein.

115. The unlawful prong of California Business and Professions Code §17200 prohibits any unlawful business practice.

116. Each of Defendants' violations of 47 U.S.C. § 227(b) and Cal. Civ. Code §1770(a)(22)(A) vis a vis Plaintiff as described herein all constitute separate and cumulative violations of unlawful prong of §17200.

117. Plaintiff has incurred actual damages in the form of annoyance, wasted time, wasted cell phone battery, and for the cost of postage to mail Defendants a complaint letter.

118. Plaintiff is authorized to pursue a private right of action against Defendants under §17204.

119. Plaintiff is entitled to injunctive relief and restitution.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff THANE CHARMAN, individually and on behalf of the Class, prays for the following relief:

A. An order certifying the Class as defined above, appointing Plaintiff THANE CHARMAN as the Class representative and appointing Plaintiff's counsel as Class Counsel;

- 1 B. An order declaring that Defendants' actions, as set out above, violate 47
2 U.S.C. § 227(b) of the TCPA;
- 3 C. An order declaring that Defendants' actions, as set out above, violate the
4 TCPA *willfully* and *knowingly*;
- 5 D. An order declaring that Defendants' actions, as set out above, violate Cal.
6 Civ. Code §1770(a)(22)(A);
- 7 E. An order declaring that Defendants' actions, as set out above, violate the
8 unlawful prong of Cal. Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code § 17200;
- 9 F. An injunction requiring Defendants to cease all unlawful calls without first
10 obtaining the call recipient's express written consent to receive such calls,
11 and otherwise protecting interests of the Class;
- 12 G. An award of statutory damages;
- 13 H. An award of attorney's fees and costs pursuant to Cal. Civ. Proc. Code §
14 1021.5; and
- 15 I. Such other and further relief that the Court deems reasonable and just.

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17 Dated: May 6, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

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19 JAVITCH LAW OFFICE

20 By: /s/ Mark L. Javitch
21 Mark L. Javitch (California SBN 323729)
22 480 S. Ellsworth Ave
23 San Mateo CA 94401
24 Tel: (650) 781-8000
Fax: (650) 648-0705

25 Attorney for Plaintiff THANE CHARMAN
26 *and the Putative Class*
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28